

Policy on Assessment

Introduction:

The original assessment policy was updated in 2004. It was reviewed and updated in 2009 and in 2013. The current policy was again updated in January 2014.

Policy Rationale:

The core of the policy is that all children should experience success at school. This policy endeavours to identify, at the earliest possible opportunity, children who may have learning difficulties and put in place a school response to their needs. It also addresses the need to track pupils' progress from class level to class level. An effective assessment policy is central to this core objective. Incorporating the two forms of assessment, assessment of learning (AoL) and Assessment for Learning (AfL), or summative and formative assessment is important to ensure effective means of measuring an individual pupil's progress through the school, by assessing a pupil's performance against national norms and in-school tests, and also by allowing learners responsibility for their own learning.

Relationship to School Ethos:

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child, the enhancement of teaching processes. An effective Assessment policy identifies early interventions that need to be put in place to ensure that enhancement, increased confidence and raised self esteem is achieved. Summative evidence on learning achievement will inform parents and pupils of progress, while formative feedback on learning will help pupils identify where they are in their learning, what they need to do next and how best to achieve this.

Aims and Objectives:

The primary aims/objectives of the policy are;

1. To facilitate improved pupil learning
2. To create a procedure for monitoring achievement
3. To track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers
4. To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses

Policy Content:

This policy is geared towards using assessment to inform planning and identify the needs of all pupils, including the exceptionally gifted so that adequate strategies are put in place early enough to facilitate remediation. These strategies may include pupil self assessment, pupil profiling, two way communication between parents and teachers, modification of teacher programmes and individual education plans.

Summative Assessment:

Teachers administer class tests regularly. Spelling and tables tests are usually administered on a weekly basis, and other summative tests may be administered at intervals to ascertain the pupil's understanding or grasp of a particular concept or skill. Written reports are issued to parents twice annually with the results of subject tests and comments on the pupil's progress.

Formative Assessment:

Assessment for Learning involves using evidence and feedback to pupils to encourage dialogue and to develop the self-assessment skills of learners. Expectations are shared with learners as learning objectives and will be reflected in the feedback teachers give the pupil. The learning goals are shared with the pupils (WALT) as well as the success criteria (WILF). This process involves both the teacher and the pupils reviewing and reflecting on the pupil's performance and progress and involves pupils in being able to assess themselves and their peers. Teachers may then adjust their teaching to take account of the results of the assessment.

Standardised Testing:

All classes from First class upwards are tested. The tests are the Drumcondra Reading Test for Literacy and the Sigma-T for Maths and are usually administered in the first two weeks of May. The individual child's result is then included in the summer report. Standard and percentile ranking scores are recorded on the class record template and stored by each individual teacher with a copy held on file in the LS room. The SET (Special Ed Team), along with the class teacher, analyse the results in June for allocation of resources to pupils in the next IEP term.

Diagnostic Assessment:

This school policy on Assessment, lists all current diagnostic tests used by the school. Such tests are administered, from Senior Infants, by the Learning Support and Resource Teachers following referral by the class teachers in consultation with parents/guardians. The administration of such tests is in keeping with the approach recommended by Circular O2/05 where a staged approach is used by the individual class teachers before recourse to diagnostic testing /psychological assessment. Parents are provided with test results and if a psychological assessment is warranted, parental permission is sought and a consent form is completed. The Principal and Special Needs Coordinator will facilitate such an assessment happening.

The diagnostic tests used in the school include;

- Neale Analysis
- DTEL/DTEN
- Jackson – Get Reading Right
- Aston Index
- Quest
- Ted Ames Reading Diagnostic
- Maths Tracker

Newer and more up-to-date tests are being reviewed at present by the SEN team.

Screening:

The screening tests used to identify learning strengths and weaknesses in the school are;

- Belfield Infant Assessment Programme
- Jolly Phonics Reading assessment
- Drumcondra Early Literacy Screening

- Drumcondra Early Numeracy Screening
- Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST)
- Quest Screening
- SPAR / Parallel Spelling Test
- Non Reading Intelligence Test (NRIT)
- Aston Index
- Young GRT
- Sigma T (occasionally)
- Drumcondra Reading Test
- Micra-T
- Sigma-T

These tests are administered individually or on a class basis. The MIST is administered on a class basis around February of each year, while the other tests are administered individually by the Learning Support Teacher when deemed appropriate. Screening is used by the school to initiate the staged approach to intervention as per Circular 24/03 and Circular 02/05.

Psychological Assessment:

If stages 1 and 2 fail to deliver adequate intervention, the class teacher/Principal will contact the parents for permission to secure a psychological assessment for their child (see Whole School Plan for SEN). An assessment will determine the subsequent level of intervention, be it 'Learning Support Resource' hours or an 'Individual Education Plan'. The most common form of assessment used in our school is teacher observation, teacher designed tests, projects and homework (informal assessment). These informal assessments are at the discretion of individual teachers. Records of teacher-designed tests are kept by the individual teachers and communicated to parents by the class teacher at the Parent-teacher meeting and the school report issued at Christmas and the end of the school year. Each teacher has discretion as to the format, administration and frequency of in-class testing. The most common types of informal teacher designed testing in our school are weekly tables tests, spelling tests, dictation tests as well as more formal Christmas and summer tests .

Recording:

Each LS/RT pupil has a file which is stored in the LS room or individual RT rooms. This file records standardised test results and end of year reports. A copy of relevant information is passed from teacher to teacher as the child progresses through the system. Procedures are in place to manage sensitive data (see Data Protection Policy). Individual LSR files of children who have left the school are kept in a locked filing cabinet in the Library and copies of class reports of all children who have left the school are kept in a locked data storage filing cabinet in the same room. All records are kept until the child has reached the age of 21 when they are then shredded.

Success Criteria:

This policy is considered successful if;

- Early identification and intervention is achieved
- Clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in a staged approach
- Procedures are clear, with roles and responsibilities defined
- The Special Education team have clearly defined roles and objectives
- There is efficient transfer of information between teachers

Roles and Responsibilities:

Mainstream Special Education Teachers and the Principal assume shared responsibility. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to set in train staged interventions at class level. At Stage 2, the responsibilities are shared with the Special Education Team. The Principal assumes a primary role at Stage 3 when a Psychological Assessment may be required. Parents have a role at all stages and the lines of communication must be always kept open.

Implementation:

This policy supersedes previous policies

Ratification & Communication:

This policy was again reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management in April 2014 and communicated to parents thereafter on the school web-site. It is also available for viewing in office

29th April 2014

Review Timetable:

This policy will be reviewed again in 2015 and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process.

References:

DES Circular 02/05 – 24/03

DES Learning Support Guidelines 2000

www.sess.ie

Working Together to make a Difference for Children - NEPS